The Women In Science Parkville Precinct held a workshop on writing Career Disruption Statements on 9th February 2015 at the Doherty Institute. Around 50 people attended the event. Professor Margaret Sheil, former CEO of the ARC and Dr Saraid Billiards, from the NHMRC addressed the group and a lively panel discussion followed. The main points to emerge are as follows:

- Career disruptions happen to lots of researchers and can happen at anytime.
- Career disruptions can have long term implications e.g. not just the actual period of maternity leave, carers leave, paternity leave or illness.
- Don’t be hesitant to write a statement – they are taken into account and taken seriously.
- "Book end" your Career Disruption. Demonstrate your performance before and after the disruption (where appropriate).
- Apply the “but for…..I would have ....” test. This helps clarify the disruption and what you would have achieved.
- Where pre-interruption quality can be demonstrated do so!
- Think broadly about the impact of the disruption – not just publications but also travel and invitations.
- For some fields it also impacts on focus – that is a change of focus might be needed in a rapidly changing field or a field not conducive with pregnancy.
- When thinking about your career disruption and return to work it may be helpful to about the niche that suits you, your career and life stage. This may align with your group but not be entirely dependent on the group’s progress.
- Consider claiming extra publications in career disruption statement so as to emphasise your typical productivity and highlight ‘but for the career break I would have achieved.....’
- Tell the story about your career disruption don’t just state there has been one but spare the detail. Less is more! Panels don’t need or want all the details. Personal details not required, i.e. chronic illness can substitute for detailed description of illness.
- Base your career disruption on the time you have worked – NHMRC - if you took extra time off that might not have been formally documented (e.g. was not mat leave, or was listed as full time but ended up being part-time) it is still fine to calculate and add to your numbers.

Overview of NHMRC process.
- All Career Disruption Statements for NHMRC Project Grants will be reviewed by independent assistant chairs in 2015.
- The audience emphasised the need for this to happen in the fellowship scheme too.
- If any reviewer makes inappropriate comments contact the NHMRC immediately. These reviewers comments can be disregarded if appropriate and the reviewer might be removed from the reviewing process.
- NHMRC are considering making some training available to panel members and reviewers called “Unconscious bias” - for information see http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2014/may/01/unconscious-bias-women-holding-back-work and you can take an online test https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Study?tid=1

Additional information for grant offices to send round
- In regard to Junior members being investigators on project grants - there have been changes: Please note Category Descriptor changes in particular junior team members in Team Quality and Capability "May involve junior members who are very strong contributors to the overall team quality & capability or will have the capacity to do so due to the availability of very strong mentoring by other members of the team” http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/file/grants/apply/peer_review_guidelines/2015/project_grants_peer_review_guidelines_2015_attachment_a_141218.pdf